

The following is an account of a radio conversation involving the US Navy off the Newfoundland coast in October 1995.

Several battleships of the US Navy had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge of one of the ships reported, 'Light, bearing on the starboard bow.'

'Is it steady or moving astern?' the captain called out.

The lookout replied, 'Steady, captain', which meant they were on a collision course. The captain then called to the signalman, 'Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, we advise you change course 20 degrees south'.

Back came the reply, 'Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees north.'

The captain said, 'Send, I am a captain, change course 20 degrees south.'

'I am a seaman second class' came the reply. 'You had better change course 20 degrees north, immediately'.

By this time, the captain was furious and went personally to the radio transmitter to send a message. He shouted out, '*THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 20 DEGREES SOUTH OR YOU WILL BE ENGAGED AND FACE THE MOST SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES*'.

Back came the reply, 'THIS IS A LIGHTHOUSE. It's your decision!'